

## Promoting Lifelong Healthy Eating Among Young People

# How You Can Help

*Everyone can make a difference in young people's lives by helping them learn how to adopt healthy eating habits. If you are a parent or guardian, student, teacher, school administrator or board member, food service staff member, athletic coach, community nutritionist, health care provider, or anyone else who cares about the health of young people, here are some steps you can take.*

### Everyone Can

- ✓ Set a good example by eating a balanced diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- ✓ Find out what schools are doing to promote healthy eating.
- ✓ Join a school health or nutrition advisory council and guide nutrition policy.
- ✓ Provide positive suggestions to food service managers.
- ✓ Join students for school lunch.
- ✓ Encourage schools to offer and students to participate in the School Breakfast Program.
- ✓ Speak to school administrators and school boards about the importance of effective nutrition policies and programs.
- ✓ Urge parent associations and school clubs to sell healthy foods or nonfood items for fund-raising activities.

### Parents or Guardians Can

- ✓ Provide healthy snacks for school parties and special events.
- ✓ Help school staff plan activities where students can sample healthy foods.
- ✓ Involve children in selecting and preparing food.
- ✓ Offer children a variety of healthy foods, keep healthy snacks on hand, and make mealtime an enjoyable experience.
- ✓ Share nutrition information with children and talk with them about nutrition projects and homework assignments.

### Students Can

- ✓ Set goals for healthy eating habits and monitor progress.
- ✓ Make healthy choices in the school cafeteria or when packing lunch.
- ✓ Ask for healthy snacks.
- ✓ Encourage friends and family members to eat healthy foods and be physically active.
- ✓ Use nutrition labels to select low-fat snacks.
- ✓ Urge the student council to request healthy food choices in school and at school events.
- ✓ Take elective courses in health, nutrition, cooking, and physical education.
- ✓ Help plan school and family menus.

## Teachers Can

- ✓ Develop a comprehensive scope and sequence for nutrition education.
- ✓ Choose curricula that meet the criteria set out in the CDC guidelines.
- ✓ Work with food service managers, coaches, physical education teachers, and other staff to coordinate nutrition education efforts and give students consistent messages about healthy eating.
- ✓ Request healthy snacks for class parties.
- ✓ Avoid using food to reward students.
- ✓ Take part in nutrition training sessions and share experiences with other teachers.
- ✓ Find and use resources for nutrition education.
- ✓ Involve families and community organizations in nutrition education activities.

## School Food Service Staff Can

- ✓ Provide meals that are tasty and appealing to students and that meet USDA nutrition standards and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- ✓ Support classroom lessons by offering foods that illustrate key messages, decorating the cafeteria with educational posters, and posting the nutritional content of foods served.
- ✓ Coordinate activities with classroom and physical education teachers and other staff.
- ✓ Involve students and families in planning school menus.
- ✓ Offer meals that reflect the cultural diversity and preferences of students.
- ✓ Take part in training sessions on nutrition education and on marketing school meals.
- ✓ Invite parents to lunch and give them information about the nutritional value of the meal.

## School Administrators and School Board Members Can

- ✓ Organize a school health or nutrition advisory committee that includes all key groups.
- ✓ Make sure students have enough time to eat in a safe and comfortable dining area.
- ✓ Stock vending machines with 100% fruit juice and other healthy snacks; make sure that healthy foods are served at school meetings and events.
- ✓ Prohibit the sale of high-fat, high-sugar snacks during mealtimes and as fund-raisers.
- ✓ Allocate adequate time for nutrition education as part of a sequential, comprehensive health education program.
- ✓ Hire teachers and food service managers with appropriate training and support ongoing in-service training.
- ✓ Bring classroom and physical education teachers, food service managers, and other staff together as a team.
- ✓ Evaluate school nutrition programs.

For more information about what schools can do to promote healthy eating among young people, please see CDC's *Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating*. The guidelines are available on the Internet at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/nutguide.htm>. Print copies are available from CDC, Division of Adolescent and School Health, ATTN: Resource Room, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, Mailstop K-32, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717; e-mail: [ccdinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:ccdinfo@cdc.gov); phone: (770) 488-3168; fax: 888-282-7681.